

Language Matters

By Ruth P. Silverberg and Robert B. Kottkamp

This essay requires some brief historical background because the context is specifically North American. In 1993, a Special Interest Group, *Teaching in Educational Administration* (TEA/SIG), was born at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association as a result of work of the Division A (Administration) Task Force on Teaching and Learning in Educational Administration and the particular efforts of Jane Lindle and Paul Bredeson. Fulmer and Frank (1994) described the TEA/SIG's birth:

Professors. . . celebrated. . . with wine, charter member certificates, and spent several hours. . . in dialogue about the successes of their courses or programs. [The] creation of a SIG on Teaching and Learning. . . provided SIG members with additional forums to focus on the practice of their craft, to present papers, and to attend other experimental sessions (p. 137).

However Fulmer and Frank's description of the prevailing context was less sanguine, noting that "...attention to teaching and learning in educational administration... [is] now inchoate and disparate... (1994, p. 135). The authors added,

Over the decades, the attention paid to teaching and learning by US based professional associations such as NCPEA [National Council for Professors of Educational Administration] and UCEA [University Council for Educational Administration] has been sporadic and cyclical. In some instances, the attention at the formal level was "espoused" rather than real. Actual attention to teaching and learning occurred . . . at the informal level among groups of professors . . . at NCPEA. Until the advent of the UCEA Annual [Convention] in 1987, professors participating in UCEA programs did not have a regular forum to meet and share ideas (p. 137).

We note that Fulmer and Frank (1994) consistently referred to "teaching **and** learning" as the focus and work of the new SIG, yet, only the word "teaching" appeared in the official title. The proposal attached to this essay contains the rationale recently sent to TEA/SIG members to change what we believe is an anachronistic name of a professional organization that has provided legitimization to the study of our work in preparing school

leaders. While written specifically for the membership of TEA/SIG, our proposal has much wider application and import beyond the SIG.

Our proposal announces a need for a worldwide shift in language, thought, and mental models about leadership education. It challenges authors for *The Journal of Research in Leadership Education* to make **learning** a primary focus of inquiry. It challenges us to do and report solid research on leadership education outcomes. It challenges authors to attend to learner voices and to make them available to the field through **JRLE** articles. It challenges professors and other providers of leadership education to make our own learning transparent and the legitimate focus of inquiry. It challenges us to engage in a new, deep, and public dialogue about the purpose and ends of our work with aspirants to leadership.

Our rationale is about more than a name change for the TEA/SIG. We invite JRLE readers to join us in a conversation that challenges and extends our understandings of the language that frames our profession.

Proposal for Name Change
Teaching in Educational Administration to
Learning and Teaching in Educational Leadership

In our 13 years, TEA/SIG has led a North American movement to study how we prepare school leaders and was a midwife legitimatizing such inquiry. Consider the ensuing changes: Acceptance of our articles in major journals has risen. The National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation emerged. AERA Division A now competes with us for proposals under its Section 5: Leadership Development. SIG/UCEA pre-sessions on program evaluation became the Taskforce on Evaluating Leadership Preparation Programs. The *Handbook of Research on the Education of School Leaders* is birthing, and the new *Journal of Research on Leadership Education* is launching. We did not cause all this ferment; other engines of change also transformed latency to action, but we have been a spark plug to movement and direction. **So, given our positive effect on the field under our current name, why change it?**

Because: Administrative functions are always necessary and important; the contexts within and without the schools push our students to perform these functions. But administration will not move schools to a new state where student learning is the true compass of vision and direction of effort and activity. Moving schools through such

transformation is a leadership challenge, not an administrative task. We insert *leadership* to remind us of the preeminent and sustained focus on learning required of our students. All following paragraphs address learning and why it is central for us and our students.

Because: At our birth, AERA 1993, Ed Bridges enacted a great metaphor. Internally conflicted between presenting his prepared keynote and facilitating conversation about our work, he put his speech aside. He chose our learning over his teaching. As a result our learning continues. Ed's passion and gift to us then was PBL: problem based **learning**. PBT, (problem based teaching), would be something quite different.

Because: Fine-tuning the focus of current ferment is important. Learning - student learning - is the core of the educational enterprise; that is where we need to focus our vision and the energy to effect change. Placing *learning* first signifies this import.

Because: Language is important. Note the words in the commission, journal and handbook referenced above: "education," and "preparation," not "teaching" and "training." In fact, we lack specific language for making learning central.

Because: *Teaching* standing alone focuses us primarily on content and delivery, that is, behaviorist assumptions. Evidence in papers and journals indicates we seldom close the circle by examining learning resulting from our teaching.

Because: Changing what we do with students requires us to learn *with* them and each other. Literature on program change indicates that unless we professors are first deep learners in each other's company, very little actually changes. Reflective practice affirms this proposition: deep, double-loop learning changes behavior, and deep learning requires excavation and confrontation of our tacit assumptions, mental models, and theories-in-use. Learning requires us to overcome the tension of our whole acculturation pulling our behaviors back toward the safe and comfortable known.

Because: Ordering *learning* before *teaching* creates cognitive dissonance. We are *trained* to say/think: *teaching and learning*. Reversing this sparks the twinge, signaling need for reflexivity.

Because: Moving toward social justice requires deep learning, not more *knowing that*. Enacting social justice requires double-loop learning, confronting tacit assumptions wherein lie bias, discrimination and inequity. We cannot facilitate deep learning in others until we have confronted it ourselves.

Because: Our students' voices and the meanings they construct through our programs are currently almost absent. Our SIG/UCEA Taskforce on Program Evaluation is working to fill the void about how our students learn or do not learn in our programs and whether any learning is deep enough to affect how they act as school leaders.

Because: Only if we are learners do we interact reciprocally with those outside our culture. When invited to visit or consult in other cultures, to the degree we only take the stance of teacher bringing enlightenment rather than the stance of a reflective learner, we miss the meaning of differences between systems. In early post-Soviet times, for example, those differences included looping, small K-12 schools, teaching mathematics beginning with ideas and word problems rather than formulas. Becoming deep learners enables us to cross borders of culture, race, paradigm, and national systems of education, and to facilitate our students in crossing them.

Because: In the end, our learning and our students' learning is about democracy. We and our students are heavily socialized by a system whose goal is to inject information and skills in following directions. This approach has become extreme in the past decade. NCLB dictates annual testing; state regulations dictate curriculum; NCATE dictates content of teacher and leader programs. Even we in the academy have learned the importance of following directions as we write program descriptions and reviews. These conditions call for radical public statements of what we believe about the purpose and possibilities of education in the United States of America. The great purpose of education in a democracy is to provide conditions for individuals to search for and find their voices. Because voice, speaking out, even ignoring directions, is democracy actualized. A society of direction followers who heed the order to "sit down, be quiet, and listen to me" is not a democratic society and cannot be a just society.

Because: By focusing on learning and becoming learners, we facilitate self-awareness and voice. Through learning, understanding our own and others' distinctive ways of knowing, we and our students find our own voices and connect to the voices of others.

Focus on teaching alone may silence. Focus on learning creates open and continuing conversation. As leaders preparing leaders for the primary institution responsible for preparing our children for democratic citizenship, we have a moral and ethical responsibility to voice constantly, consistently and publicly a message that every voice matters. Changing our name to **Learning and Teaching in Educational Leadership** moves toward this purpose by setting empowering language that says what we believe matters and that empowers colleagues and students to voice publicly what they and we believe.

Reference

Fulmer, C. L, & Frank, F. P. (1994). Focusing on teaching and learning in educational administration: Emerging roles for NCPEA, UCEA and AEREA. In J. L. Burdin & J. R. Hoyle (Eds). *Leadership and diversity in education: The second yearbook of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration* (pp. 135-144). Lancaster, PA: Technomic.

Ruth P. Silverberg is an Assistant Professor at the College of Staten Island, CUNY USA.

Robert B. Kottkamp is a Professor at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY USA.